



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Ellen R. Schleicher
Register of Deeds

January 21, 2019

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Adam Payne,

I am pleased to present you with the 2018 Register of Deeds Annual Report.

Property sales were a higher in 2018 verses 2017 and our revenues were higher then what we projected for 2018. We hope that trend continues going into 2019 however the market is very unpredictable and with interest rates increasing, it is hard to foresee how the real estate market will be affected.

I would like to commend the staff for the work accomplished in 2018. They continue to put the customer first, by listening and helping solve their problems and concerns. They are willing to educate themselves and are ready to help work through issues that occur throughout the year.

The cross training of the staff has paid off tremendously as any given day we can count on staff to step up and help when needed. We will strive to continue to this process. They make a great team working together towards the greater goal; to make things better for the customer. I wish to thank them for their help, support, enthusiasm and hard work. Their dedication to their positions, the department, and Sheboygan County make our accomplishments possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen R. Schleicher
Register of Deeds

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

The mission of the Register of Deeds is to be fiscally responsible while serving the public in a courteous and friendly manner, following and enforcing the state statutes that dictate our office along with preserving and protecting real estate records, vital records and miscellaneous documents.

The Register of Deeds office is the primary source of legal documents, which affect virtually every individual living in Sheboygan County. This includes personal and real estate ownership and encumbrance records in addition to financing instruments that are the basis of individual and business credit ratings. This office executes the final acceptance and filing of new subdivisions, condominium plats, Transportation Plats (TTPs) and Certified Survey Maps. We also administer the Vital Records Registration system, which includes registration of all births, marriages and deaths of county residents, probate instruments, and business documents such as corporate filings.

Other duties include registration, preparation, and issuance of copies of military records (DD-214s), alternative informal probate procedures (HT-110; Termination of Decedents Interest in Property), and registration of US Treasury Federal Tax IRS Liens. Other statutory responsibilities include the collection of real estate transfer fees and recording fees, currently divided between Sheboygan County and the State of Wisconsin.

Required reports are given to the following governmental agencies: US Treasury (Federal IRS Tax Liens), Wisconsin Department of Revenue (transfer fee tax collection and property valuation for tax equalization), and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (plat review and the Wisconsin Land Information Program) and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (Vital Records).

Sheboygan County Departments that depend upon us for information and services include Veteran's Services Office, Planning & Conservation, Clerk of Courts, Treasurer/Real Property, County Clerk, and Transportation.

Recorded land records are the basis of the real estate property tax. Translated into monetary terms the land records in the Register of Deeds office represent \$9.7 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County which is a 1.62% percent increase in value from 2017.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2018

- We processed 20,792 real estate documents, filed 3,215 vital records documents and 45 Military discharge records. Legal documents issued totaled 24,177 and that does not include copies issued to county departments, which were 202. We had a total of 378 genealogical searches. We recorded 49 new condominium units and 40 subdivision lots.
- Our back indexing project is still on-going. We are now offering images from September 29, 1972, forward. If we can continue this trend we may be able to complete our goal of offering images on-line back to 1962 in the next four to five years. As we have set our goals to complete this project, all other back indexing projects have been placed on hold.
- Receiving documents electronically has remained steady in 2018, on average 34% of all documents recorded are received via internet.
- Working with marriage officiants, funeral directors, nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and doctors in regards to the State Vital record system is an on-going situation which we will

continue to do.

- We had a major upgrade to our land record software (AVID) along with an upgrade to the on-line software (Laredo). There were a few minor glitches and we were able to solve them out without interrupting service to our customers.
- This past fall we implemented a confidentiality form for internal Laredo users.
- In conjunction with the Sheriff's Department and Clerk of Courts a procedure was created for processing Sheriff's Deeds to comply with the Foreclosed Property Bill that was passed in December 2017.
- Excellent Customer Service is always our focus and one of the ways we achieve this is by recording and returning documents in a timely manner. Counter customers are greeted in a friendly way and helped within minutes of walking through the door. If there is a problem with their requests, we promptly explain the problem and give them an estimated time when we can get an answer for them. Remote Access customers can view their recorded documents almost immediately after processing, usually within 24 hours. We strive to return paper documents within days of recording.

Budget

	2017	2018
Revenues	\$2,168,131	\$2,362,687
State Share	\$1,264,805	\$1,418,058
County Share	\$903,325	\$944,626
General Fund (excess over budget)	\$123,209	\$174,564

2018 was a very robust year for the real estate market which helped us exceed our budget expectations. Our projected budget for 2019 is \$844,695 and is \$200,000 more than our 2018 budget because of the scanning project we are proposing to start. We will continue to contain our expenses while still giving quality service. It is our goal to ensure that we will not utilize any property tax levy but continue to add to the tax levy and general fund, when possible.

Issues and Challenges Ahead

Once again we have lost a very knowledgeable and valuable staff person due to retirement. The challenge now is to find a person who can help fill that gap. It is always a struggle to replace the knowledge that was lost. This will set our office back a bit, as the remaining staff will need to pick up the extra work. However, I am confident that we will be able to get up to speed in a timely manner.

With the start of the State-wide issuance of vital records, we need to continue to offer the best customer service we can. Anyone can now go to any local vital records office in the State to receive their birth records and in the future death and marriage records. We need to be diligent to ensure that people continue to utilize our office for their vital record needs. It is our job to create a positive environment so they recommend our office to their family and friends for their vital records needs.

Goals and Objectives for 2019

- Begin our last stage of scanning books which are dated from 1848 to 1937. The estimated timeline from the vendor is 15 to 18 more months for completion.
- Continue to keep our focus on the turn-around time of real estate documents. The needs of banks and lenders must be met in order to keep the local financial market and economy healthy. We will attempt to keep that turn-around to less than a week.
- Continue back indexing of documents.
- Work on getting the rest of the land records scanned.
- Continue to work with the marriage officiants, funeral directors, nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and doctors with questions they have regarding the state's vital record system.
- Look into a more efficient billing system for our Laredo customers.
- Work with our legislators regarding legislation that our association submits.
- Work with our software vendor to update and improve programs.
- Continue to work on updating and improving our written procedures.
- Continue to work with the State Vital Records Office to update and improve service.
- Ensure a confidentiality form is signed for internal users of our Laredo software.
- Continue to encourage people to record their land records electronically.
- Continue to get pertinent information to all the staff in our office via email or short meetings. We feel it is important to keep the communication lines open.
- Offer staff opportunities for online training.
- Encourage staff to look for ways to improve themselves.
- Resume back indexing our vital records and Military Discharges (DD-214s).
- Explore the possibility to integrate document numbers located in the Treasurer's software.
- Work with our association on a clean-up bill for Chapter 69, clarification of electronic signatures, clean-up legislation on condominium and plat standards, remote notarization, and standardization of Certified Survey Maps.
- Ensure that employees are utilizing their time to improve the productivity within the office. We are constantly striving to find the proper technology to help improve our productivity and efficiency, without compromising our customer service.
- In order to maintain and improve our customer service I will continue to empower the staff by communicating the information they need to meet our customers' questions and concerns.